UNITED
NATIONS

HRI

International Human Rights Instruments

Distr.
GENERAL

HRI/CORE/1/Add.113
14 May 2001

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

CORE DOCUMENT FORMING PART OF THE REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

HAITI

[5 January 2001]

GE.01-42051 (E) 210601 220601

I. LAND AND PEOPLE

General characteristics of the country

1. The Republic of Haiti, which has a surface area of 27,750 square kilometres, shares the island of Haiti, in the Caribbean Sea, with the Dominican Republic. Its latitude gives it a tropical climate, with temperatures varying between 25° C in winter and 35° C in summer. Annual rainfall averages 1,056 millimetres.

2. The Republic of Haiti is divided into nine departments, 41 arrondissements, 133 communes, 55 quartiers and 561 communal sections (art. 9 of the Constitution). Each department has a seat, which is the department's main town.

The departmental seats are: Port-au-Prince, the capital (Ouest), Cap-Haïtien (Nord), Port-de-Paix (Nord-Ouest), Fort-Liberté (Nord-Est), Gonaïves (l'Artibonite), Hinche (Centre), Cayes (Sud), Jacmel (Sud-Est), and Jérémie (Grande-Anse).

3. The national currency is the gourde; it is divided into centimes (art. 6 of the Constitution). The current rate of exchange is about 24 gourdes for US$ 1.

4. The two official languages are Creole and French.

5. There are three major denominations: Catholicism, Protestanism and Voodoo. All religions and faiths may be freely exercised (art. 30 of the Constitution).

6. The most recent census, conducted in 1982, put the population of Haiti at 5,053,191 inhabitants (2,449,550 men and 2,603,640 women). The population in 2000 was officially estimated at 7,958,964 inhabitants, for a population density of 285 inhabitants per square kilometre; 65 per cent of the population live in rural areas.

7. The population of Haiti is characterized by its extreme youthfulness. Forty per cent of the population is under the age of 15, and 15 per cent under the age of 5. This is the combined result of internal demographic factors, a relatively high birth rate, a moderate death rate and mass emigration of working-age inhabitants. According to the estimates of the Haitian Institute of Statistics and Information Technology (IHSI) and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), between 1995 and 2000 the crude birth rate was 34.1 per cent and the crude death rate 10.72 per cent. During that same period, women of childbearing age (15 to 49 years) represented about 45 per cent of the total population.

8. More than half the total population, or 56.2 per cent, is of working age (15 to 64 years). People aged 65 and over constitute about 3.8 per cent of the total population.

9. The average annual population growth rate rose from 2.03 per cent between 1985 and 1990 to 2.08 per cent between 1995 and 2000. That increase is essentially the result of a high fertility rate (an average of 4.8 children per woman in 1995).

Socio-economic indicators

GDP (millions of US$)	2 767.75
Infant mortality (per 1,000)	67.48
Life expectancy at birth (years)	58.4
Per capita GNP (in US$)	356.4
External debt (millions of US$)	1 174.5

II. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

10. The country's general political structure is set forth in the Constitution of 29 March 1987.

11. The preamble to the Constitution refers in particular to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

12. Article 1 of the Constitution stipulates: "Haiti is an indivisible, sovereign, independent, cooperatist, free, democratic and social republic."

13. The Constitution establishes a number of independent institutions, inter alia the Permanent Electoral Council, the Conciliation Commission and the Office of Citizen Protection.

14. The Office of Citizen Protection, headed by the Protector of Citizens, has a mandate to "protect all individuals against any form of abuse by the Government" (art. 207).

15. The exercise of national sovereignty is delegated to three branches of government, each of which is independent of the others (arts. 59 and 60).

16. Legislative power is vested in two representative houses, the House of Deputies and the Senate, which together form the legislature, or Parliament (art. 88).

17. Article 111-8 of the Constitution provides that in no case may the House of Deputies or the Senate be dissolved or adjourned, or the terms of their members extended.

18. Executive power is vested in the President of the Republic, who is Head of State, and the Government, which is headed by a prime minister (art. 133).

19. Under article 136 of the Constitution, the President of the Republic ensures respect for and enforcement of the Constitution, institutional stability, the regular operation of the public authorities and the continuity of the State.

20. The Government is composed of the Prime Minister, the Ministers and the Secretary of State (art. 155), and conducts the policy of the nation (art. 156). It is headed by the Prime Minister (art. 133).

21. The Constitution provides for genuine regional executive power through the territorial divisions known as the communal sections, the communes and the departments (art. 61).

22. Under article 173 of the Constitution, judicial power is vested in the Supreme Court, (Cour de Cassation), the Courts of Appeal and of First Instance, courts of peace and special courts, whose number, composition, organization, operation and jurisdiction are established by law.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

23. Title III of the Constitution deals with the nature of citizenship (arts. 16-18), basic rights (arts. 19-51) and the duties of citizens (arts. 52-52.3).

24. Citizenship entails both civil and political rights (art. 16). The age of majority is 18 years (art. 16.2). Haitians are equal before the law, subject to the special advantages conferred on native-born Haitians who have never renounced their nationality (art. 18).

25. Article 54 of the Constitution provides that foreigners on the territory of the Republic shall enjoy the same protection as that accorded to Haitians under the law.

26. The Constitution lists a number of rights and guarantees, more particularly the right to life and health (arts. 19-23), to individual liberty (arts. 24-27.1), to freedom of expression (arts. 28-29.1), conscience (arts. 30-30.2), and assembly and association (arts. 31-31.3), to education (arts. 32-34.1), to freedom to work (arts. 25-35.6), the guarantee of property (arts. 36-39), the right to information (art. 40), and the right to security (arts. 41-51).

27. The rights enshrined in international human rights instruments ratified in accordance with the rules in force in the Republic of Haiti are part of domestic legislation. In that respect, article 276.2 of the Constitution provides:

> "Once international treaties or agreements are approved and ratified in the manner stipulated by the Constitution, they become part of the legislation of the country and abrogate any laws in conflict with them."

28. The Constitution limits the Government's ability to suspend the guarantees mentioned above. In that respect, article 278 of the Constitution provides:

> "No place or part of the territory may be declared in a state of siege except in the event of civil war or invasion by a foreign force."

IV. INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY

29. Article 40 of the Constitution is worded as follows:

> "The State has the obligation to publicize in the oral, written and televised press, in the Creole and French languages, all laws, orders, decrees, international agreements, treaties and conventions on everything affecting national life, except information concerning national security."

30. The texts of international instruments are published in *Le Moniteur*, the Republic's official gazette. The Government plans to disseminate them more broadly in the near future.

31. At the initiative of non-governmental organizations working in the human rights field, several seminars and workshops have been organized in different parts of the country for different sectors of the population with a view to making human rights more widely known.